

Otter Harvest 2005-2006

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Abstract

Wisconsin trappers registered 1,518 otters during the 2005-06 season, including 1,255 taken with DNR issued permits, 45 taken off reservation by native trappers, 44 taken on reservations, and 174 taken incidentally. This was an increase of 15% from the otter harvest in 2004-05 and the twelfth highest harvest since Wisconsin has been registering otters. The counties of highest harvest were Chippewa (70), Taylor (69), Polk (63), Sawyer (60), and Burnett (54).

Background

Bluett (1985) described the procedures for obtaining otter tags, and registering/tagging otters in Wisconsin. Dhuey, et al. (2005) described the results of the 2004-05 otter trapping season. Otter harvest goals are set annually for each otter management zone based upon population size in relation to management goals. The number of harvest permits issued are based on the average trapper success rate during the previous three years in those zones. Negotiated amounts of the harvest in each zone within the ceded territory are allotted to native American (Chippewa) trappers.

Methods

Non-Chippewa trappers are required to obtain an otter trapping permit before pursuing otter in Wisconsin. The application fee for an otter permit is \$3.00, (included in the Patron license fee). Trappers were required to register all harvested otters with the DNR.

The 2005-06 otter season ran from 5 November 2005 – 30 April 2006 in the Northern Zone and 5 November 2005 - 6 March 2006 in the Central and Southern Zones (Fig. 1). Trappers were required to register all otters with DNR personnel. The area of kill (county and deer management unit), date of kill, sex of the animal, type of trap used, type of animal (fur farm or wild), and the name and address of the trapper were recorded for each otter registered. These data were entered into the DNR UNIX computer by district personnel and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS). Otters trapped by native Americans on ceded lands were included in the harvest summary. Data on off-reservation treaty otter harvest was provided by the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (Jonathan Gilbert; pers. comm.).

Results

A total of 8,693 applicants applied for the 4,180 otter tags issued in 2005-06 season (Table 1). The average number of tags per applicant was 0.54 in the Northern Zone, 0.45 in the Central Zone, and 0.38 in the Southern Zone. There were approximately 7% more applicants for permits and 1% less permits available than in 2004-05 season. In addition, a Chippewa allocation of 90 otters was agreed to for their use during the Chippewa off-reservation trapping season (1 November 2005 to 31 March 2006) on ceded lands.

A total of 1,518 otters were registered during the 2005-06 season. This was an increase of 14% from last year. Permit success for the 2004-05 season (30%) was greater than last year (24%). (Table 1.) Chippewa trappers took 45 otters on ceded lands; 61 less than were harvested in the

2004-05 season (these data were provided by the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, P.O. Box 9, Olanah, WI, 54861). A total of 44 otter were registered with kill locations on Wisconsin's reservations. Native Americans are now registering a portion of on-reservation kills with DNR personnel. A total of 174 otters were registered as incidental, these were taken accidentally to other trapping activity, found dead, or road kills. All of these kill types are included in the statewide totals.

The average price paid for otter pelts by furbuyers was \$101.32 in 2005-06. This was more than the \$78.03 paid for otter pelts in 2004-05, and was well above the long-term average of \$42.30 (Table 2).

Chippewa county had the highest number of otters harvested (70) followed by Taylor (69), Polk (63), Sawyer (60), and Burnett (54) counties (Fig. 1). Deer management Unit 23 was the leading unit of harvest with 48 otters registered (Fig. 2).

More males (876; 57.7%) were trapped than females (603; 39.7%). Thirty-nine (2.6%) registration forms did not report the sex of the otter or reported the sex as unknown.

Body-gripping traps accounted for 81% of the otters harvested in 2005-06, and foothold traps accounted for 17% of the otter trapped. One percent of otters trapped were caught in snares.

Eleven percent of the otters harvested this season were reported as being incidentally taken while trapping for other species, found dead, or road kill. The regular beaver season ran concurrent with the otter season in each respective zone. The WDNR Furbearer Advisory Committee recommended a statewide harvest goal of 1,300 otter in the 2005-06 season. Quota by zone is: North Zone, 780; Central Zone, 325; South Zone, 195. Tribal declarations only occur in the North Zone.

Literature Cited

- Bluett, R. 1985. The 1983-84 Otter Tagging Report. Wis. Dep. Nat. Resources. 7 pp.
- Dhuey B. J. Olson. 2005. Otter Harvest, 2004-05. IN: The Wisconsin Wildlife Surveys Report. August 2005. Document on file at the Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources, Bureau of Research, Monona, WI. 53711.

Table 1. 2005-06 Wisconsin state otter harvest goal and applicant results.

Zone	State Harvest Goal	Permits Issued	Applicants	Tags/ Applicant	State Harvest*	Percent Success
North	690	2,320	4,313	0.54	668	28.8%
Central	325	1,180	2,611	0.45	376	31.9%
South	195	680	1,769	0.38	208	30.6%
Unknown					3	
Total	1,210	4,180	8,693	0.48	1,255	30.0%

* Does not include incidental or tribal otter harvest.

Table 2. *The annual number of otter permits mailed to Wisconsin trappers, total registered otter harvest, and average pelt price, 1976-2006.*

Year	Number of Permits Mailed	Total Registered Harvest	Average Pelt Price (\$)
1976-77	5,050	1,271	
1977-78	5,218	1,113	47.83
1978-79	4,914	962	82.15
1979-80	5,754	1,448	60.05
1980-81	7,269	1,122	33.79
1981-82	8,256	1,024	26.89
1982-83	7,403	960	24.70
1983-84	8,294	995	25.68
1984-85	7,516	1,213	24.41
1985-86	7,104	960	22.84
1986-87	6,599	1,588	29.62
1987-88	9,360	1,724	23.87
1988-89	7,838	1,127	20.14
1989-90	6,360	1,213	24.11
1990-91	4,613	744	14.39
1991-92	2,799	762	12.50
1992-93	3,201	969	33.24
1993-94	5,531	1,130	57.30
1994-95	9,282	1,816	48.76
1995-96	14,800	1,517	44.47
1996-97	16,457	2,443	45.66
1997-98	15,429	2,704	43.70
1998-99	10,898	1,530	37.05
1999-2000	12,510	2,178	46.48
2000-01	11,180	1,844	54.01
2001-02	12,119	2,601	56.00
2002-03	8,370	2,053	77.12
2003-04	4,810	1,588	89.49
2004-05	4,240	1,322	78.03
2005-06	4,180	1,518	101.32

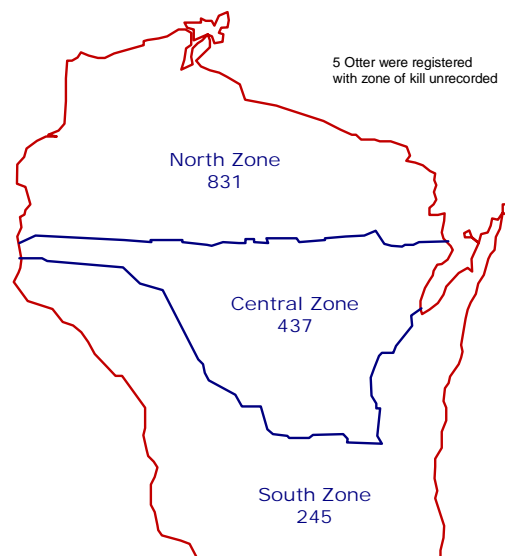


Figure 1. *2005-06 Otter kill by Zones.*

